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by Mary S. Smith

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SERIES 9 November, 1915 NUMBER 1

Meredith College

Quarterly Bulletin

1915-1916

"Union Sentiment in North Carolina"
by
Mary S Smith

Published by Meredith College in November, January, March and May

Entered as second-class matter, January 13, 1908, at the post-office at Raleigh, N. C., under the act of Congress of July 16, 1894

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MEREDITH COLLEGE

NOVEMBER, 1915

Union Sentiment in North Carolina During the Civil War

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(One of a group of papers read at the Sixteenth Annual Session of the State Literary and Historical Association at a meeting in the Hall of the House of Representatives in commemoration of the Semi-Centennial of the close of the Civil War, November ninth, 1915.)

Since the beginning of the great European War, we have realized anew how difficult it is to get at the real truth of history, and that most events that bring about profound changes have various elements which are almost impossible to analyze. Facts may be recorded, but motives, causes, purposes—the unseen forces of thought which lie back of all the rest—these are more elusive.

In any country under stress where there is continued unanimity of action it would appear to come from strong social control of thought and conduct, indifference, ignorance, or some colossal danger. An alert and thinking people are in time bound to differ.

As North Carolina has always stood for individualism, and as there was much divergence of thought down to the war, it would be most unusual if the outward Act of Secession in April, 1861, would for long make the minds of all the people run in the same channel, although the sudden shock or social control might for a time, at least, make them appear to do so. One learns to make allowances on both sides for expressions of partisanship and to realize that usually the real conditions are somewhat different from the strongly emotional contentions of either side. For, as in the present great war, any divergence of feeling North or South would have been kept as far as possible within the lines and those in control would try to minimize the divergence.

The horrible blunders of Congress in the administration of the South during the period of reconstruction, which compelled all elements of the people to unite, have largely made us overlook the different state of mind during the war itself.

This paper is based largely on the files of the *Fayetteville Observer* from July, 1853, through December, 1864, and on three large bound volumes of "Hale Papers" from 1850 to 1865. *The Observer* until the outbreak of the war was Whig and strongly Union; during the war it was unfailingly loyal to the Southern cause, and from the election of Governor Vance in 1862 to the close of the war it particularly represented his administration. The paper was one of the ablest in the State and of commanding influence. The private papers comprise a large number of personal letters, many of them confidential, from the most prominent men in the State. So far as known they have never before been read except by the Hale family and at the office of the State Historical Commission. Such material should reflect most unconsciously and therefore accurately the prevailing sentiment of the State. It is an interesting experience in studying a momentous period in history to forget the present and live again with those who are recording and interpreting the events, especially with one who in personality and training looks at life in a large way. Such an interpreter was Edward J. Hale, in the pages of whose paper the past of North Carolina, our country, and the world live again. While going through the files of these papers, the writer most unexpectedly had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Edward J. Hale 2d, of Fayetteville, now United States Minister to Costa Rica. He said that the *Observer* continued to be printed until Johnston's army marched through the town. It was then for a time suspended and the files of the paper hurriedly buried. The private papers have at different times been through fire, water and smoke, so that numbers of them are somewhat difficult to read and the edges burned.

On April 15 of 1861 the *Fayetteville Observer* carried an advertisement from Greensboro—Prospectus of the "Stars and Stripes." This was to be a three-months campaign paper for

the Union, during which it was hoped to reach "the great public ear of the State."[1]

In the same issue there occurred in small type the headline "Sensation Dispatches." Of these Mr. Hale says: "But the oddest part of the affair is that the [*Petersburg*] *Express* should publish this dispatch with such blood and thunder heading just above the 'very latest,' showing that the story was an arrant humbug."[2]

But farther on we find, "The War Commenced!!" "Bombardment of Fort Sumter!!!" The statements at first are hardly credited, then as more and more reports come, Mr. Hale says:

"This is dreadful news. War is a terrible evil. Civil war the worst of all earthly evils. Nothing but dire necessity can justify it. We are too imperfectly advised as yet of the causes to pronounce decidedly whether that necessity existed in this case. Let us wait for something more definite and reliable than the telegraph furnishes. * * *

"Let us wait. And let us wait long before we unite our destinies with those of a people who have ignored us, our interests, feelings, and honor, from first to last. If we should be impelled to separate from the Union, *let us take care of ourselves.*"[3]

In the issue seven days later we are shown the instantaneous and thrilling effect of Lincoln's proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand troops and asking North Carolina to send her quota. To this Governor Ellis replied: "You can get no troops from North Carolina." Mr. Hale in an editorial says: "Will she do it? Ought she to do it? No. No. Not a man can leave her borders upon such an errand, who has not made up his mind to war upon his own home and all that he holds dear in that home. For ourselves we are Southern men and North Carolinians, and at war with those who are at war with the South and North Carolina."[4]

Governor John W. Ellis had on the 17th called a special session of the Legislature to meet on May first; ordered seized the coast forts and the United States arsenal at Fayetteville; and called for volunteers.[5]

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[1] *Fayetteville Observer*, April 15, 1861, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[4] *Ibid.*, April 22, 1861.
[5] Hill, *Young People's History of North Carolina*, p. 271.

The Observer quotes an article from the *Raleigh Standard* which shows that the "Unionists" of North Carolina will all stand by the South when it is attacked. This is particularly to be noticed as in February the people had voted against calling a Convention to consider the relations of the State to the Federal Union 47,333 to 46,672 and at the same time had elected eighty-three (83) Union delegates to thirty-seven (37) Disunion delegates in case a Convention was held.[6]

The Legislature on May 1 passed an act providing for an election on May 17 of delegates to a Convention to meet on May 20. The Legislature also voted various measures in preparation for war.[7]

When the Convention met in the Commons Hall at the capitol, one hundred and sixteen delegates were present and four absent. It had as members many of the most influential men in the State.

While a preliminary vote seemed to show forty-nine for the Badger theory of revolution and sixty-six for the Secession ordinance of Craige, the Craige ordinance was finally unanimously adopted.[8] One of the members years afterward wrote: "I remember well that when the act of Secession was consummated the body looked like a sea partly in storm, partly calm, the Secessionists shouting and throwing up their hats and rejoicing, the Conservatives sitting quietly, calm, and depressed."[9] A week later North Carolina joined the Confederacy. Yet even during these early days we find slight references to individual uncertainty or difference of opinion.[10]

While these things were happening in the South, the North, equally thrilled by the firing on Fort Sumter, was for the time seemingly fused into one party and ready to crush, if possible, all opposition to the policy of the government.

This seeming unanimity of opinion North and South, we must remember, was at the beginning of the struggle, when few on either side realized what the actual conflict would mean. That

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[6] *North Carolina Manual*, 1913, pp. 1013-1015, 1018, Note 10.
[7] *Senate and House Journals*, 1860-1861.
[8] *Journal of the State Convention*, 1861, pp. 3-17, also *Fayetteville Observer*, May 27, 1861, p. 1.
[9] Holden, *Memoirs*, p. 17.
[10] *Fayetteville Observer*, Jan. 20, 1862, pp. 2-3; Jan. 27, 1862; Feb. 3, 1862, pp. 2-3; Feb. 10, 1862, p. 3.

there was later much divergence in the North is well known; that there would also be honest difference of opinion in the South was also to be expected. These differences were more or less unorganized during the first year or two of the war, though the newspapers by 1862 reflect the tendency to criticism. The independence of the press and its freedom from arrest under both the State and Confederate Constitutions is an important fact to remember.

An example of the conditions developing in the State is shown in a private letter from William J. Yates, editor of the *Charlotte Democrat,* to Mr. Hale, dated August 18, 1862, discussing conditions in Forsyth, in the ccurse of which he says:

"I think, though, it is not best to make some things known to the public at this time; therefore I have refrained from giving information of disaffection in certain localities through my paper. I have not published one-sixteenth part of what I have heard, because I dislike for the public outside of the State to know that we have any tories in the State * * * a large portion of our population is disaffected. The conscript law has cooled the patriotism of many alarmingly, and I know of some who were very patriotic in words before that law went into operation, but who now manifest anything else but the right spirit—they are tired of the war and say they are willing for anything to stop it."

In the summer of 1862 came the biennial election for Governor, the first since the war. There were no regular conventions held and no platforms adopted, but leading newspapers suggested candidates and some county meetings were held. Col. William Johnston, President of the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad, was the candidate of the Democratic papers, while Col. Zebulon Baird Vance, who had been brought forward by Holden of the *Standard* and supported by the *Observer* and other leading papers, opposed Johnston and was elected by over 30,000 majority.

This election was interpreted by some as unfavorable to the Confederate Government, as Colonel Johnston was a Democrat, while before the war Vance had been a Union man. Some of the Northern papers misinterpreted the election in this way, as some historians have since,[11] but Vance had been in the army

[11] *Fayetteville Observer*, Sept. 1, 1862; Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, p. 283.

from the outbreak of the war and was to show as Governor his loyalty to the State of North Carolina and the South.

All through the following winter the *Observer* reflects the conflicting reports of conditions in the State. In an editorial on the interference of the *Richmond Enquirer* in the affairs of North Carolina Mr. Hale says:

"And yet forsooth these Virginians lecture her upon loyalty and duty; falsely charge her with entertaining a 'plot' to overthrow the government, and insinuate that she has a lurking hope of a restoration or reconstruction of the defunct and despised Union. And one of the high officers of the Confederate Government, whose duties bring him in contact with thousands of North Carolinians, both civilians and soldiers, insolently and falsely calls her 'a damned nest of traitors,' for which, if President Davis has a proper idea of what is due himself and to an insulted State, he will pitch the slanderer out of the office he disgraces."[12]

In the next issue there is an editorial showing how certain newspapers in Virginia, as the *Richmond Enquirer,* and in South Carolina, slander the State, though Mr. Hale admits that they are moved by certain journals in North Carolina itself, "which," as he says, "have no State feeling." Twice during March the *Observer* appeals to the press for the sake of the cause to stop wrangling and making charges of unfaithfulness which are calculated to encourage the enemy as much as a great victory.[13]

We are approaching the summer of 1863, when the discontent was to be organized and find a leader in the editor of the *Raleigh Standard,* W. W. Holden, who had been a power in the political history of the State since about 1850 and had brought forward Vance as a candidate for Governor in 1862.

The history of the State through the war was so largely moulded by these two leaders that their attitude toward the State, the Confederacy and the war should be most carefully studied.

In the biography of Jefferson Davis, written by a brilliant native of North Carolina, the idea is given that Vance and

[12] *Fayetteville Observer*, January 12, 1863, p. 3.
[13] *Ibid.*, March 5, 1863, p. 3; March 26, 1863, p. 3.

Holden worked together in opposing the Confederacy and for peace.[14] As the book was published in 1907 Mr. Dodd's sources were, I assume, the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* which contain only Governor Vance's controversies with President Davis. The Vance and the Hale papers had not then been made available for historical purposes. In these sources, many of which were confidential letters written in the stress of the times, the evidence seems irrefutable that Vance and Holden broke with each other in the summer of 1863 over the issue of the Peace meetings, Governor Vance continuing to work for the Southern cause throughout the war.

Before discussing the "Peace Movement" it may be well to say a word about Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy. In a most interesting paper on "A Theory of Jefferson Davis" in the *American Historical Review* for October, 1915, Mr. W. W. Stephenson of Charleston, South Carolina, writing of the central fact of Davis's youth, says:

"* * * He was a boy without a country * * * his was a migratory growth, frequently transplanted[15] * * * The army must to a considerable extent have been his country * * * Long afterward, in his final crisis, Davis failed to appreciate a certain type of man. It was a type in which love of one's community had become a passion. To that type he appeared, in those stern days, to be a monster. To him, apparently, the crushing of that type seemed a matter of course."[16]

Again Mr. Stephenson says:

"Davis at the outset of his career accepted the political theories, the political phraseology, of the States' rights party * * * For fifteen years he had talked one thing while he meant another, talked the constitutional rights of the individual States while what he really meant was the economic interests of a consolidated South. * * * He clung to the phraseology of States' rights as stubbornly even as Rhett, or Stephens, who genuinely believed it. And yet when occasion finally tested him, behind his words, striking through his words, appears something quite different—the Southern Nationalist.[17] * * * The internal history of the Confederacy is largely the battle of these irreconcilable ideals[18] * * * His States' rights

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[14] William E. Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, pp. 283, 301, 337-340.
[15] W. W. Stephenson, "*A Theory of Jefferson Davis*," in *American Historical Review*, Vol. XXI, pp. 73-74.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

phraseology and his long series of centralizing measures appeared to them irreconcilable.[19] * * * He became the prisoner of an illusion."[20]

The able paper on the "Relations Between the Confederate States Government and the Government of North Carolina," given by Judge Montgomery before this Association in 1913, reveals clearly this element in the situation.[21]

Mr. Dodd in writing of the general condition of the Southern Government at the beginning of 1863, says: "The commanders of the troops were at loggerheads; parties and cliques had grown up; and the President was not implicitly trusted by the people."[22]

Between these two forces of the State and the Confederacy stood Vance. On the one side he must safeguard the rights of the Sovereign State of North Carolina which he thought were being threatened, and, on the other, he must hold the State loyal to the Confederacy to which she had pledged her faith.

On June 10th he wrote a private letter to Mr. Hale asking him to come to Raleigh. This is thought to be the beginning of the association of Governor Vance and Mr. Hale, although they knew each other before. In this letter Governor Vance says:

"I wish to talk with you about some matters seriously affecting the *status* of the party which elevated me to office and perhaps the good of the Confederate cause itself, and I hardly wish to put anything I desire to say on paper. I make this request of you, as being more nearly of my *precise stripe* politically—past and present—than any other editor in the State; and as the undisputed organ of the war element of the old Whigs.

"Things are moving here in a manner calculated to give *such a Whig* uneasiness and I desire advice and consultation. I hope to see Mr. Graham this week."

In a letter from Dr. Kemp P. Battle from Raleigh to Mr. Hale, July 3, 1863, he adds this confidential note:

"I am afraid there is growing a split in the Conservative party; e. g. Vance and yourself on one side and on the other those who love to thwart and carp at the Confederate Government and the war."

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[19]Stephenson, *Jefferson Davis*, pp. 87-88.
[20]*Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
[21]Walter A. Montgomery, "Relations Between the Confederate States Government and the Government of North Carolina," *Proceedings North Carolina Literary and Historical Association*, 1913, pp. 35-55.
[22]William E. Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, p. 299.

In a confidential letter dated July 26, 1863, from Governor Vance to Mr. Hale he says:

"I assure you I am deep'y concerned at the turn things have taken. I asked Mr. Graham, Governor Swain and others to talk to Holden, but it has done little good—he pretends and maybe really is of opinion that four-fifths of the people are ready for reconstruction, and says he is only following the people not leading them—This is not true in fact—he is responsible for half this feeling at least, if it exists; of course the driver sits behind the team and yet may be said to follow his horses.

"I had a long talk with him yesterday—and requested him to say in his paper that he was not my organ on this matter and did not speak my sentiments. He promised to do so. I think it all important that the people should know my sentiments so that should there be a split, he may not be committing to him any persons under the idea that he was my friend, which I think likely accounts for much of his popularity."

During August the letters to Mr. Hale are numerous; practically all of them discuss the growing dissatisfaction in the State. Quotations follow from those of Governor Vance, and a few others.

In a long, closely written letter from P. W. Stanback, Little Mills, August, 1863, he says:

"Times, as you may agree with me, look exceedingly gloomy for us * * * our late reverses seem to have emboldened a few bad spirits among us, they have seized the opportune moment to encourage the disaffection that they know to have existed among the lower classes of our rural popu'ation, who (very many at least) have long entertained prejudices against the property holder especially against slave owners, they persistingly regard this war as gotten up for their exclusive benefit that they have no part or interest in it, that the burdens fall unduly heavy upon them, they therefore became greatly dissatisfied with both the exemption and conscription laws especially so with the former as giving to the s'ave owner immunities and advantages over them on account of their property, this being the case I have held * * * that the [ ] means should have pursued towards them a conci'iatory course to lend them as far as practicable a helping hand and this from principle no less than policy."

A letter from Thomas S. Ashe, member of Confederate Congress 1862-1864, Supreme Court Judge 1879-87, dated August

5, 1863, Wadesboro, to Mr. Hale, in which he mentions that he is again to run for Congress and needs advice, and also says:

" * * * but I am really fearful that if we had an armistice we should never be able to get our people to fight again, and that reunion would be the result. * * * But I tell you my dear Sir that I believe that there is a purpose (now latent) on the part of the leaders of the peace movement to carry our State back into the United States. They are just now cautiously feeling their way through these meetings but if our reverses continue, it will not be long before an organized party in the State advocating that measure will assume shape and form, and will be headed by prominent men."

A letter from Governor Vance August 11, 1863, in which he reports a successful visit to President Davis, where they discussed North Carolina affairs and Davis gave Vance authority to do certain things. He then adds:

"I believe however the split with Holden is decreed of the gods—I have made up my mind to it * * * He is for submission, reconstruction or anything else that will put him back under Lincoln and stop the war—and I might add—punish his old friends and co-laborers.

"Pitch into them—cry aloud and spare not—my life, popularity and everything shall go into this contest."

A long confidential eight-page letter from Morganton, August 29, 1863,* reports at length the disloyalty in the mountain section of the State, and says:

"I know not how it is elsewhere but this part of the State is in a deplorable condition—on the very edge, indeed, of civil strife and butchery. The mountains are full of deserters, who are banded together and emboldened by a disloyal public opinion, which is daily finding expression in popular assemblages and otherwise. All persons are beginning to feel that sense of insecurity which at is once the cause and the effect of internal commotion, and presages a speedy appeal to arms, unless arrested. The root of the whole matter is a deadly hostility to our cause and our government, notwithstanding the specious pretext under which it is sought to be covered up. [Illegible from effects of fire, smoke and water.]

"It is pretended, again, that North Carolina has been put upon and slighted—but how comes it that when the Confederate Government backs down and almost gets on its knees to apologize, these men still

*Only the initials V. C. remain of the signature to this letter, but by comparing it with other letters in the collection it seems to have been written by V. C. Barringer, of Concord.

feel affronted and will accept no satisfaction * * * If the grounds of complaint alluded to did not exist, they would find others. Now it seems to me that before we can take the first step toward a cure, we must understand something of the nature of the disease. We must boldly recognize the fact that there are in North Carolina and have been from the start, a considerable body of men—many of them influential—who have been secretly and desperately opposed to our whole movement—who acquiesced in the incipient stages of the revolution only because they could not help themselves—and who today prefer the old Union to the Confederacy. [Illegible from effects of fire and water] last a mass and strength of popular feeling setting in against the Confederacy which is as certain to entail upon us civil war in North Carolina as that the sun is in the heaven—" [He then explains they expect to follow forms of law and elect as many peace men as possible to Congress and also get control of the State Government.]

"The whole thing is managed with a skill and an energy that show the hand of a master schemer."

The writer expresses the opinion that North Carolina is more liable to change and "to be played upon by sophists and calculators than any of the Confederate States proper except Tennessee."

As remedies he suggests:

1. The loyal press must discuss the whole question fully before the people.

"Unfortunately we got divided—hotly divided about the Secession of the State in the winter of '61—one side lauding the Old Union and the other side the new Confederacy, when Lincoln's proclamation, like a clap of thunder, startled and united both sides. But it was not, I affirm, a Union based upon any intelligent and heartfelt popular conviction of the truth [Illegible from effects of fire and water]. Attachment to the Union unshaken [Illegible] hear the Confederate Government denounced as we see it daily denounced, is it any wonder that they should feel those attachments rather strengthened and that they have been led into a causeless rebellion? I speak what I know when I say that many persons believe that the Davis government is a more galling tyranny than Lincoln's. I do not mean, of course, that we should give Davis unmixed praise. [Explains that the right of separation should be explained to the people]. Crime and the guilt of crime is associated in the common mind with the hateful names of rebel and traitor. Our people, indeed, no people can sustain long the weight of the conviction that they are incurring every day the punishment due to the darkest deeds known in the catalogue of human crimes. We ought, if we cannot do

better, at least, take the ground assumed by Washington in the contest between England and the colonies, that we are fighting under the *de facto* government of the State, and as such are not guilty, even in the view of the English law of treason. Until something is done to remove this fatal impression, I cannot hope for any permanent good among our people. Let them feel that they are right in morals and in law, and we may hope all things, come though disasters may as thick as blackberries.

2. "But secondly and chiefly, a line ought to be drawn between the friends of Governor Vance and Holden. No true man doubts the integrity or the loyalty of the former—every true man must doubt that of the latter * * * You have no idea of the extent of his circulation. I have found his paper in every nook and corner of the mountains. Now with such a man you cannot mince matters. True wisdom dictates that the sooner you break with him the better—and I believe that if the friends of Governor Vance will boldly and at once shake him off, the State may be saved. Otherwise, unless we have a successful peace, he will wind the State around his fingers as he pleases and snap them in Governor Vance's face.

I have written more than I intended. I am really alarmed for the first time during the war as to the fate of North Carolina. I am ashamed of the figure she is made to cut before her friends and her enemies."

A most interesting letter from Aldert Smedes, St. Mary's School, Raleigh, August 31, 1863, in which he thanks Mr. Hale for his article replying to the *Standard,* and then says:

"But it seems to me that such heavy ordnance as you have used against him is directed at game too small. Holden is not really at the bottom of the disaffection in this State. He is merely the mouthpiece of the discontented, or the vane which shows the direction of the angry currents of popular feeling.

"The principal cause of our present troubles in this State is to be found in the stomach rather than in the heads and hearts of our people. Gentlemen, the great majority of our people cannot buy the necessaries of life at the present enormous prices! Starvation not only stares them in the face, but actually begins to work within them, and we know what a depressing [Illegible] influence upon the temper and views of men, enforced hunger produces. People who cannot get enough to eat are in a mood to grumble at everything. What wonder then that they should vent their spleen upon the war, which is the immediate cause of their suffering.

"I confess I do not wonder that the patriotism of some waxes cold, and their wrath hot when they look at the state of things around them."

Dr. Smedes then goes on to speak of the rich men who by high prices are extorting money from the poor, and says that they and not Mr. Holden are the worst enemies of the country.

Realizing the alarming condition of affairs, Mr. Hale changes the policy of attack and from minimizing the divergence, in a series of strong editorials beginning August 17th, boldly faces the issue in the open. He says:

"It can no longer be doubted or denied that there is a division in public sentiment in North Carolina—on the one hand a determination to resist subjugation by the Yankee government, and to achieve the independence of the Confederacy; on the other a peace party, as it is falsely called, that would be willing to have independence, but clamors for peace with or without independence."

He says the first are led by Governor Vance and the latter by the *Raleigh Standard,* though it is not so radical as some of its followers.[23]

As these editorials continue Mr. Hale is in receipt of various letters reporting the good effects they are having throughout the State and enclosing new subscriptions to the paper.

That the conditions in the State were critical is shown by a most important "Address of the army to the people of North Carolina" that appeared in the same issue of the *Observer* signed by seven officers, among whom were Colonel Thomas Garrett of Bertie County and Colonel Bryan Grimes of Pitt County. This was an appeal to the people to resist any effort toward factions; it discusses the questions at issue and explains why they should stand together. The appeal goes on to show the danger to the State of these tendencies and that they might lead to civil conflict within the State, as in Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri.[24]

The following independent accounts of a conference between Governor Vance, Governor Graham, Mr. Satterthwaite a member of the Governor's Council and Mr. Holden are especially important as showing the opposite positions held by Vance and Holden:

A letter from Governor Vance to Mr. Hale, September 7, 1863,

[23] *Fayetteville Observer*, August 17, 1863, p. 3.
[24] *Ibid.*, September 7, 1863, p. 4.

from Raleigh, in which he refers to a conference which Mr. Hale could not attend, but Governor Graham and Mr. Satterthwaite did. He read them letters from about thirty leading Whigs of the State, "all concurring in my views of duty."

"We sent for Holden and Governor Graham, talked to him earnestly for three hours. It would do no good—he would agree to nothing and insisted that the meetings should go on and I nor no one else should say a word! Modest proposition truly. I offered to keep silent if he would discourage the meetings—would not agree to it. Governor Graham was clear that I should issue a proclamation, but insisted it should be very mild and cautious. I have accordingly written one which will appear toworrow, but I do assure you it is not the document my judgment would have dictated, but I yielded to Mr. Graham's better advice. I do not know that I will publish [burnt] unless my friends should think it of sufficient importance. I had prepared a lengthy letter going into the argument of the case fully, but it was thought best to adopt another mode.

"From my many letters and my own knowledge of the men holding these meetings, the metal is very small—I expect the peace men really have a majority to start with but the brains are largely with us * * * I am very hopeful of the contest. [He then suggests the policy Mr. Hale is to pursue toward Holden in his paper.]

"Don't let him deceive you—he is for reconstruction out and out—Write me often—

Many years later Mr. Holden wrote the following account of the conference:

"A short time after this, Governor Graham was invited to Raleigh and I was sent for to come down and meet him at the Governor's mansion. I went down in company with F. E. Satterthwaite, Esquire, of Washington, N. C. Mr. Satterthwaite agreed with me, but took no part in the conversation. Governor Graham and Vance and myself talked for a long time on the state of the country. About that time I was publishing a series of proceedings of peace meetings in various counties. Governor Vance was opposed to them. I told him the people had a right to assemble and express their opinions and petition for redress of grievances, but I did not approve of propositions to return to the Union unconditionally; yet the people who held these meetings were the men who elected him governor. Governor Graham in this respect seemed to concur with me more than Governor Vance.[25] * * * *

"This was the beginning of the wide separation between Gov-

[25]Holden, *Memoirs*, p. 24, also pp. 76-77.

ernor Vance and myself which resulted in my opposing him for Governor in 1864, and here I may say, and do say in the most emphatic manner, that I have never questioned his integrity, nor his honor, nor the sincerity of his devotion to his principles, or to the people whose servant he was and is."[26]

Just at this time Raleigh—with a population of between four and five thousand—was thrown into great excitement by a mob which broke up part of the office of the *Raleigh Standard,* while the following morning another destroyed the office of the *State Journal.*[27]

Governor Vance took hold of the situation vigorously and the excitement seemed in a few weeks to have largely subsided. Mr. Holden in a letter to Mr. Hale, October 7th, writes that of course after the mob he could not change his policy, but the height of the excitement over the peace meetings seemed over and in a letter dated October 26th Governor Vance writes: "I receive continued evidence of a better state of feeling in the State." But December 10th in another private letter he says: "But the Holdenites are making every effort to raise a row again. God help us. I fear we are on the eve of another revolution and civil war in the State."

A letter from Governor Vance who has been ill and still not well, dated December 21, 1863, in the course of which he says:

"What would you say to Congress app'g Commrs to treat for peace? Would it do any good North or South? Their terms would not be heard of course and it might help to put down the clamor here. Many of our friends here think it the only way to save North Carolina and I confess I have been somewhat moved by their arguments but am fearful to yield my position on such without good advice. Mr. Graham was much depressed whilst here on the subject, for though we surpressed the resolutions in the caucus, yet there was dissatisfaction among men of whom you would have thought better things. Don't think me faint hearted—I have been sick and quite gloomy."

But the contest was to assume a new form, that of a Convention which was to be made the issue of the State campaign in 1864. To show that Governor Vance felt himself the servant of

[26]Holden, *Memoirs*, p. 25.
[27]*Fayetteville Observer*, September 14, 1863, p. 3.

all the people and of the peace movement which he had fought in the State itself, we have his letter to Mr. Hale dated December 30, 1863.

He had written Mr. Dortch as to the propriety of offering terms of peace in Congress. "He saw the President, who was not quite convinced of its propriety, but would consult about it." Governor Vance inclines to think more than ever it could do no harm "and would silence clamor of a certain few in North Carolina or force them to take sides against their country, which most of them are afraid to do while we still have two great armies in the field."

He gives as another reason that the plans are all arranged to advocate a Convention in the spring. This is to test Vance and he is to be beaten if he opposes it. He says: "I want the question narrowed down to *Lincoln or no Lincoln,* and don't intend to fritter away my strength on any minor issue."

A long important letter dated January 16, 1864, from D. K. McRae, who had just returned from discussing affairs at Richmond, expresses the opinion that a party strong in numbers—having an organ not unsuited to the position and determined in purpose has entered upon a plan by which the State at no distant day is to be carried out of the Confederacy." He reports having discussed the matter plainly with President Davis. "I recommended sharp and decisive measures, to wit, the suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus and the declaration of martial law, the arrest of the most guilty parties and the employment of a sufficient force to carry the laws of Congress into thorough execution."

In a letter from Governor Vance to Mr. Hale, dated January 22, 1864, he writes that many good men are alarmed over the talk, among the disaffected, about losing their liberties as *Habeas Corpus.* He asks Mr. Hale to read some documents sent him which tell of the overthrow of the ballot in Kentucky and the conditions there, so that he may make use of it in his paper to show the disaffected the conditions.

A letter from Governor Vance, February 11, 1864, after discussing the issues, says:

"I make no doubt but the Convention issue will force everything asunder and form a new party—two of them rather. I do not wish

this rupture to be upon any minor issue * * * Let them [the ultra conservatives] abuse Jeff Davis and the Secessionists to their hearts' content, so they will oppose this Convention movement and keep to their duty on the war question, and whilst I would disapprove of all this as vexatious, I hold it would be bad policy to waste my strength by quarreling with them."

Years afterward, in writing of this campaign, Mr. Holden says:

"As a 'peace' man, after July, 1863, I urged that this State alone, or with other Southern States, should negotiate for peace on honorable terms with the general government, as it seemed to be clear that Mr. Davis would not in any event attempt to negotiate; and as it also appeared to be clear that if the war went to its end our subjugation was inevitable. In this I was sustained by a large majority of our people, until Governor Vance's Wilkesboro speech on the 22d day of February, 1864."[28]

During the winter of 1864 various letters were exchanged between President Davis and Governor Vance, in the course of which the Governor urged that peace negotiations be opened with the Federals. President Davis shows the obstacles in the way and also advises him to abandon his policy of conciliation toward the promoters of discontent and set them at defiance. Governor Vance's well known letter to President Davis on *Habeas Corpus* strongly sets forth the discontent in the State, but he says: "Where and when have our people failed you in battle or withheld either their blood or their vast resources?"[29]

As is well known, Holden ran for Governor in opposition to Vance and the campaign was waged into the summer. The files of the *Observer* are missing for some months, but from the official record the vote for Governor was: Vance, 58,065; Holden, 14,471.[30] This strong endorsement of Vance showed that the State would abide by his policies. The peace feeling, as will be seen, continued through the last year of the war, but much of it might be attributed to a realization of the final outcome rather than to Union sentiment.

One more effort for peace was made in November of 1864, when Mr. Poole of Bertie County offered peace resolutions in

[28]Holden, *Memoirs*, pp. 71-72.
[29]Letter of January 8, 1864, quoted in *Fayetteville Observer* May 30, 1864, p. 2.
[30]*North Carolina Manual*, 1913, p. 1000.

the State Senate that five commissioners be elected by the General Assembly to act with others from the other States of the Confederacy as a medium for negotiating a peace with the United States; that they request of President Davis that he arrange for a conference through the medium of these commissioners; that whenever five of the State so act the Governor communicate officially with President Davis.[31]

The *Observer* later has the following special dispatch in regard to Mr. Poole's resolutions:

"The peace resolutions introduced by Mr. Poole of Bertie were tabled in the Senate today 24 to 20. A motion to reconsider was defeated 23 to 22."[32]

Mr. Hale adds: "This result would have been more gratifying if it had been arrived at with some approach to unanimity. That such resolution should have been supported by twenty-two senators is astonishing."[33]

I cannot close without a word for the masterly way in which the State affairs were managed during these years by Governor Vance and his interpreter to the people, Mr. Edward J. Hale. The more the actual conditions are understood the more amazed one is at the marvelous skill these men showed in keeping the outward organization so efficient. Both had been strong Union men, both had continued so until Lincoln's call for troops. Yet when they went with the South neither swerved in his loyalty, but worked with tireless energy and gave all he had of ability and skill to her cause.

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[31] *Fayetteville Observer*, November 28, 1864, p. 3.
[32] *Ibid.*, December 5, 1864, p. 4; December 8, p. 1.
[33] *Ibid.*, December 19, 1864, p. 1.

Conclusions

1. The vote on the matter of a Convention in February, 1861, indicates that North Carolina was strongly Union down to Lincoln's call for troops, April 15, 1861.

2. The relations between the Confederacy and North Carolina were not cordial; the people felt that the State was distrusted and treated with suspicion. The feeling seemed especially strong against many of the centralizing policies of Jefferson Davis. The extremely complex conditions of affairs between the Confederacy and the State frequently placed Governor Vance in most delicate and trying situations which, with his group of able advisers, he met with great tact, firmness and ability. The evidence from his confidential correspondence with Hale proves conclusively that he was unswervingly loyal to the State and the cause of the South from the call for troops to the close of the war.

3. Granted the right of secession from the Federal Government, it would seem that a Southern State had an equal right to secede from the Confederacy, or to treat separately for peace, although whether it would have been wise to do so is, of course, an open question.

4. That there was deep and widespread dissatisfaction with the war is evident. That there was a strong undercurrent for the Union seems probable. Either side may admire the consistent course of action of one whose fundamental belief differs from his, but who is loyal to the truth as he believes it. As with the loyalists in the Revolutionary War, the Union element in the Civil War may be accorded honesty of conviction and a right to their opinion. Any other course would strike at the basis of the glory of North Carolina's past, whose foundation is the democratic doctrine of the right of the people to self-government and to self-expression of thought.

5. Of a State with such an undercurrent of faction that could subordinate personal feeling and with one hundred and fifteen thousand voters send into the field one hundred and twenty-five thousand (125,000) troops, one can only say, as Daniel Webster did of his own State years ago: She needs no encomium. There she is. Behold her, and judge for yourselves.

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